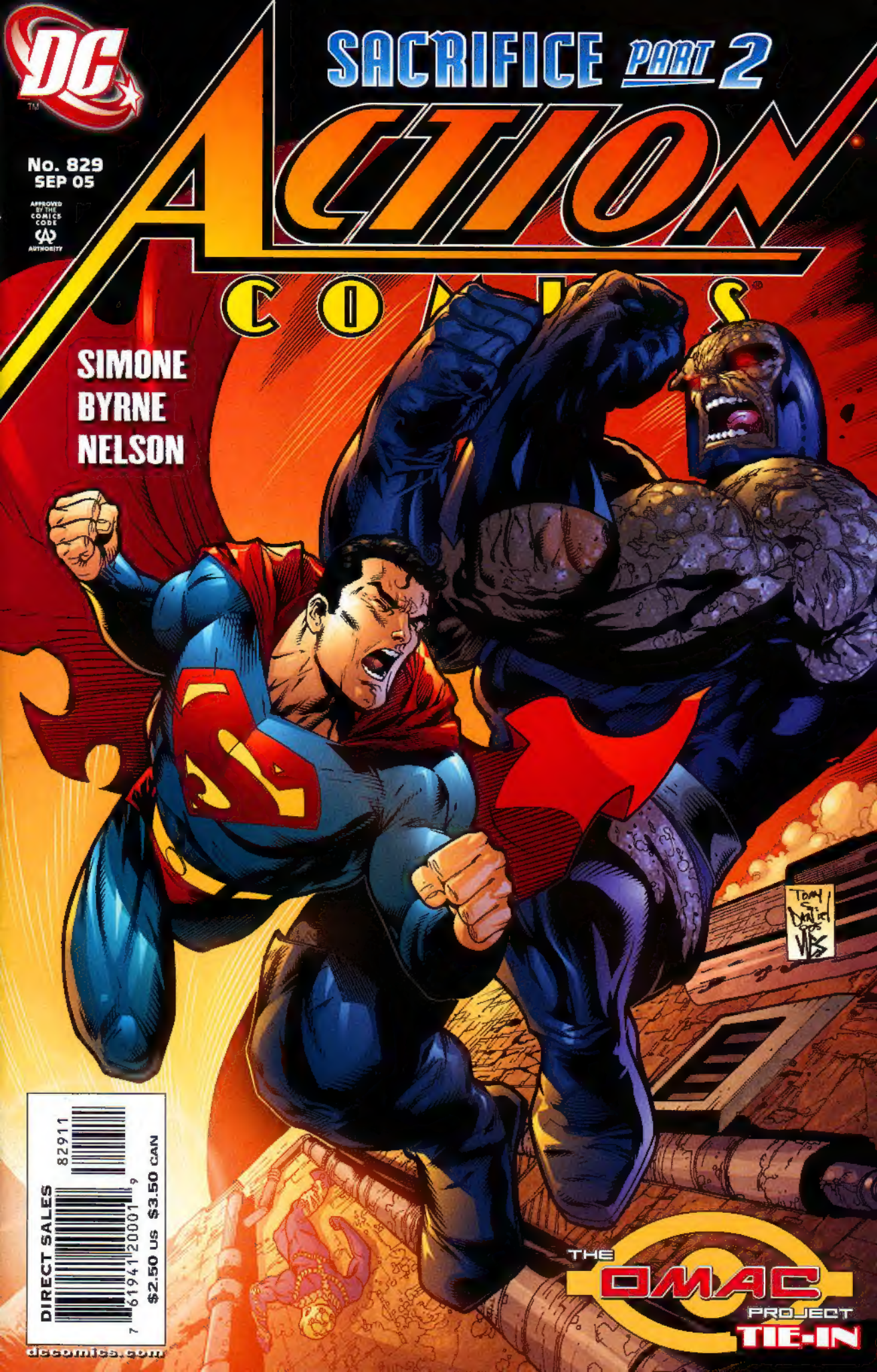
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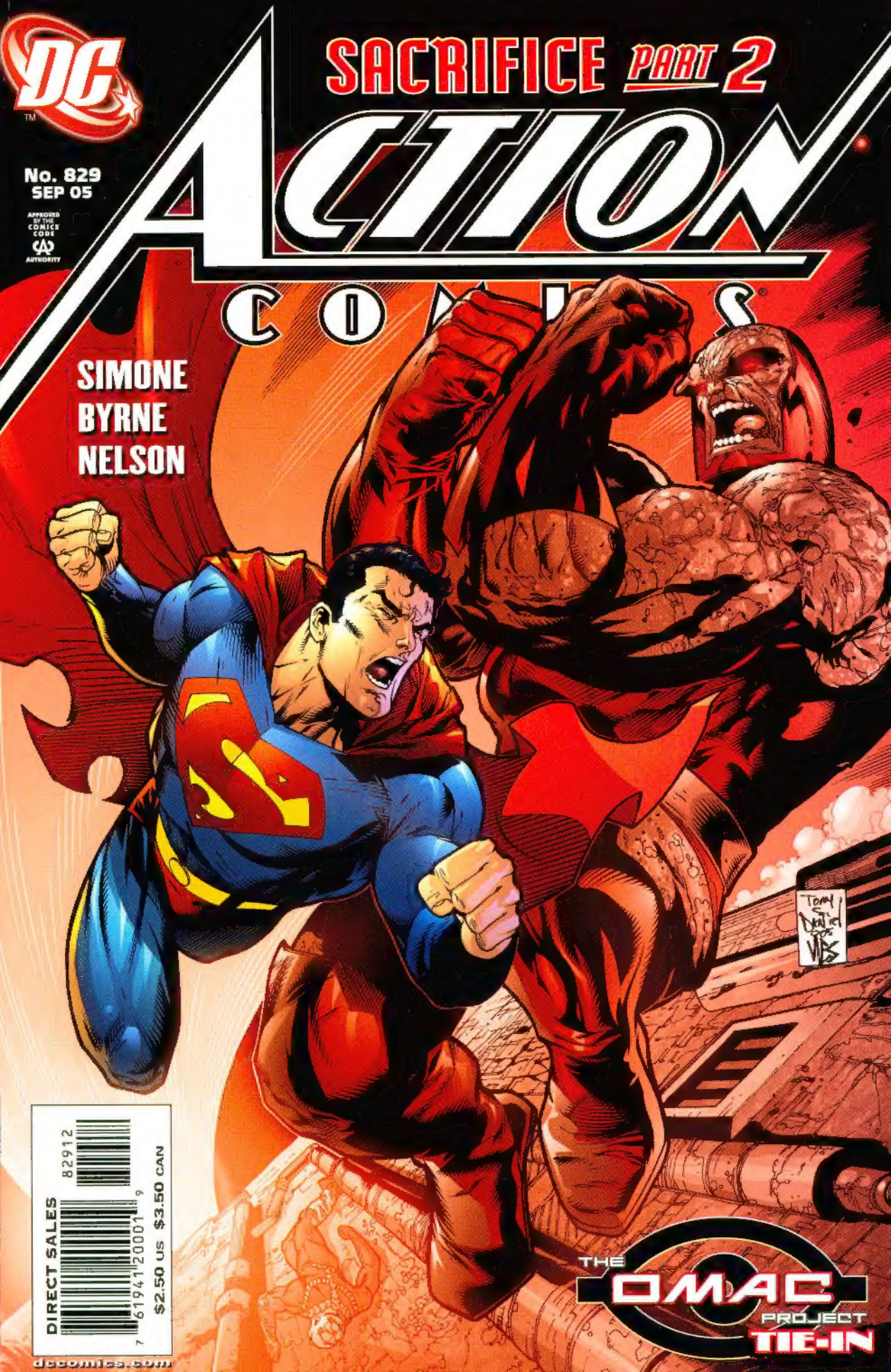
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END OF IDENTITY

SACRIFICE PART 2

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WRITER

JOHN BYRNE
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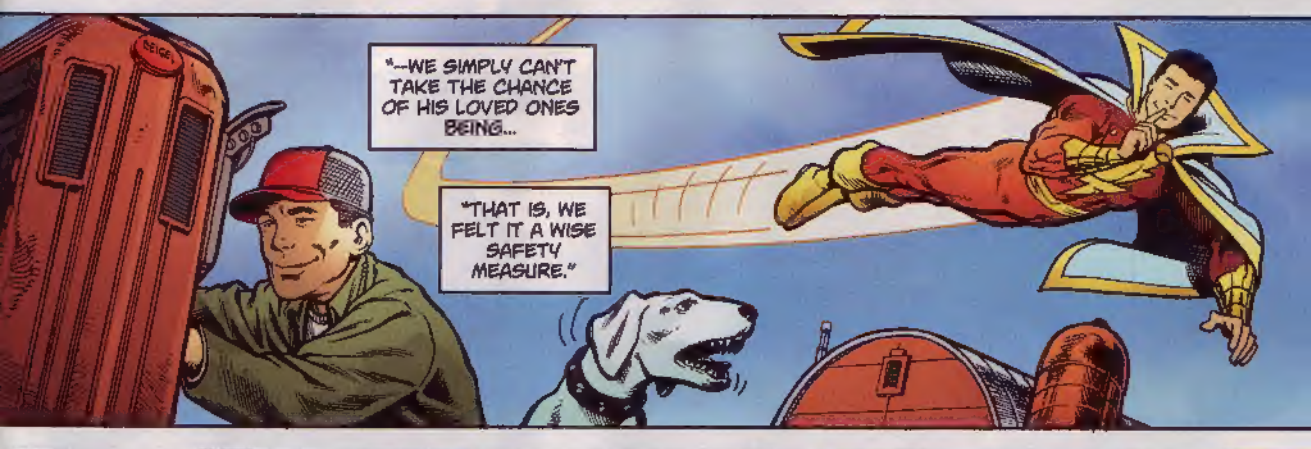
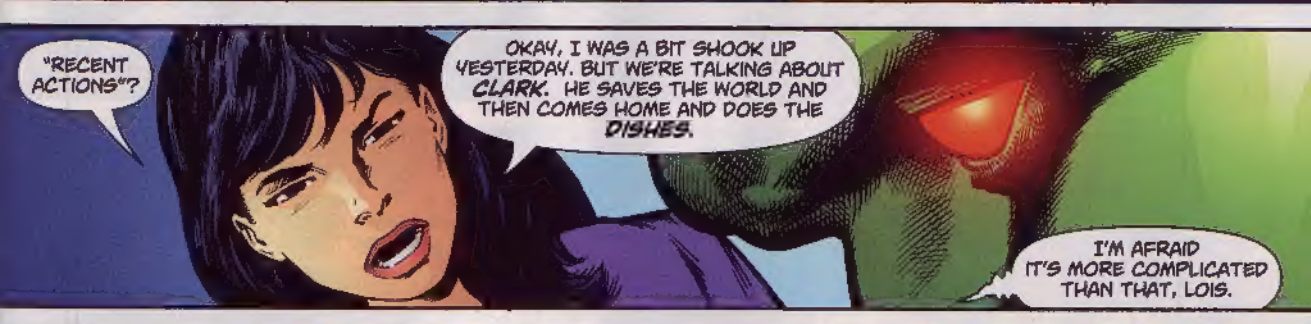
SUPERMAN CREATED BY JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MS. LANE, AH... MS. KENT?
THIS IS AWKWARD.
IT'S LOIS, J'ONN. I'M SORRY.
YOU STARTLED ME.
PLEASE, FORGIVE ME, LOIS.
I'M AFRAID I, TOO, WAS STARTLED.
IS THIS APPEARANCE MORE CALMING TO YOU?
YOU COULD COME IN LOOKING LIKE A GIANT GREEN MARSHMALLOW AND I'D STILL BE SURPRISED.
FIVE MINUTES LATER AND I COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN IN THE SHOWER OR SOMETHING.
AH. YES.
LOOK AT THAT, HE CLEANED THE KITCHEN. THANKS, CLARK.
MARTIANS, TOO, HAVE AN INSTINCTUAL IMPERATIVE TO KEEP THEIR FOOD STORAGE AREA CLEAN.
THE FLASH, I REGRET TO SAY, APPARENTLY FEELS OTHERWISE REGARDING THE WATCHTOWER DINING FACILITY.
CAN I GET YOU SOME COFFEE? OR TEA, MAYBE?
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE...
...COOKIES? OF COURSE I DO. CLARK BUYS THEM IN CASE YOU DROP IN.
ALL RIGHT, MOVING ON; WHY ARE YOU HERE, PRECISELY?
I DIDN'T MEAN TO ALARM YOU. I'M SIMPLY...
THE LEAGUE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST TO SEND SOMEONE WHO COULD COLLECT DATA ON SUPERMAN'S RECENT...ERRATIC BEHAVIOR.
FOR A METAMORPH WITH A DOZEN IDENTITIES, YOU'RE NOT A VERY GOOD LIAR, J'ONN.

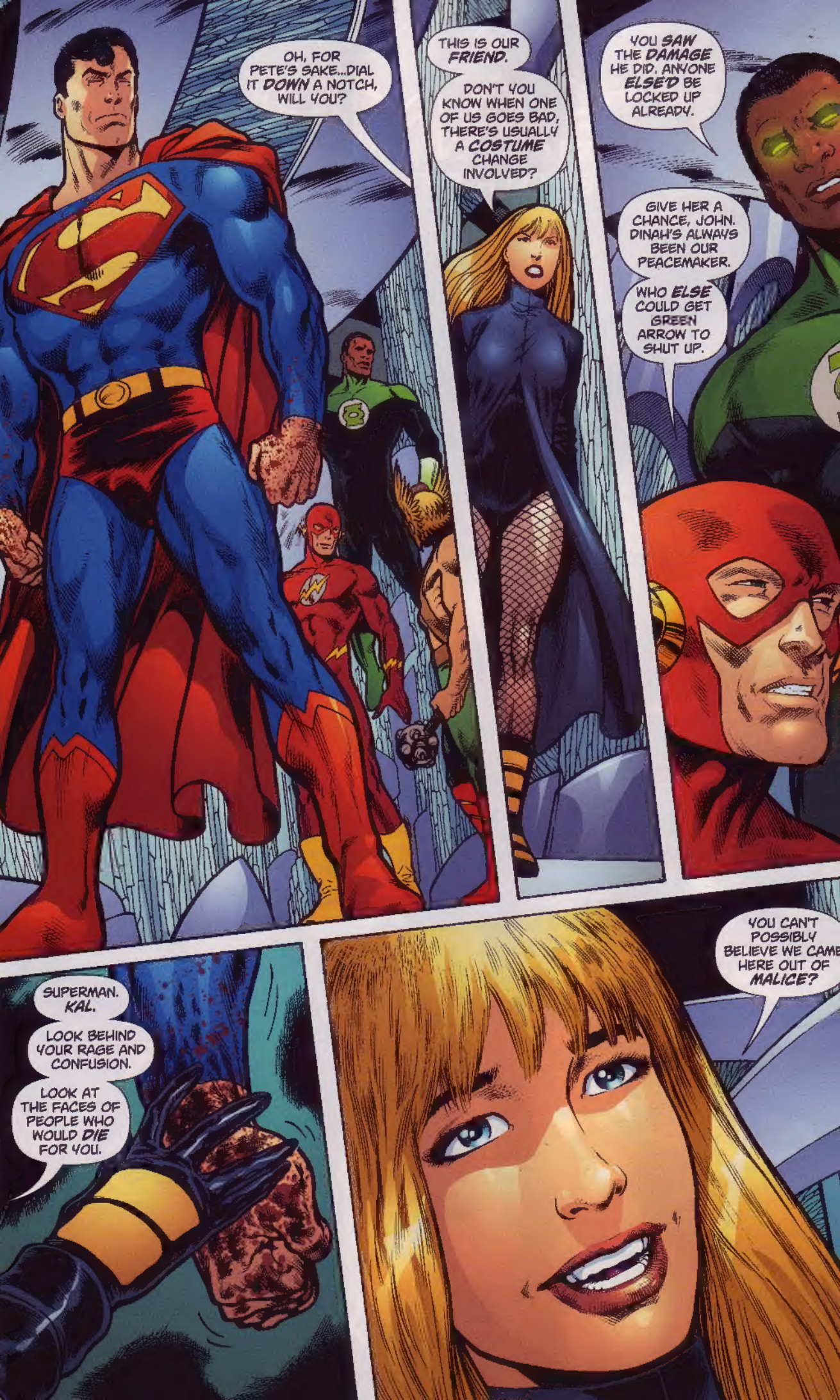
I'VE LIVED WITH CLARK LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHEN HE'S SCANNING THE SKY AND DOESN'T WANT ME TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
YOU'RE HERE TO PROTECT ME.
FROM CLARK.
IT'S TRUE, LOIS.
IT'S JUST A PRECAUTION, I ASSURE YOU.
DAILY PLANET
"AND IT'S NOT JUST YOU.
"GIVEN SUPERMAN'S RECENT ACTIONS—


"—WE SIMPLY CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE OF HIS LOVED ONES BEING...
"THAT IS, WE FELT IT A WISE SAFETY MEASURE."


"RECENT ACTIONS"?
OKAY, I WAS A BIT SHOOK UP YESTERDAY. BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT CLARK. HE SAVES THE WORLD AND THEN COMES HOME AND DOES THE DISHES.
I'M AFRAID IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT, LOIS.

"THERE'S A POSSIBILITY THAT SUPERMAN MAY BE A DEADLY THREAT TO EVERY PERSON HE COMES IN CONTACT WITH."
FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE, THE AMAZON.

JUST A WARNING, SUPERMAN.
I'VE GOT THE RING ON AUTO-FIRE, THE MINUTE ANYONE HERE MOVES ONE SLIVER OVER THE SPEED OF SOUND.
I'M TELLING YOU, YOU DON'T WANT TO TWITCH.
AND I'M TELLING YOU, LANTERN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE--
--BUT YOU DON'T THREATEN ME IN MY HOUSE.
HANG ON, HANG ON. THIS ISN'T US.
WE DON'T TURN ON EACH OTHER LIKE THIS.
WELL THAT'S AN IRONIC STATEMENT. YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID.
FLASH, RESPECTFULLY-- LANTERN'S RIGHT TO BE CAUTIOUS.
I WAS... FIGHTING. I REMEMBER.
THERE WAS BLOOD. AND THEN...
THEN I WAS HERE.


OH, FOR PETE'S SAKE...DIAL IT DOWN A NOTCH, WILL YOU?
THIS IS OUR FRIEND.
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN ONE OF US GOES BAD, THERE'S USUALLY A COSTUME CHANGE INVOLVED?
YOU SAW THE DAMAGE HE DID. ANYONE ELSE'D BE LOCKED UP ALREADY.
GIVE HER A CHANCE, JOHN. DINAH'S ALWAYS BEEN OUR PEACEMAKER.
WHO ELSE COULD GET GREEN ARROW TO SHUT UP.
SUPERMAN. KAL.
LOOK BEHIND YOUR RAGE AND CONFUSION.
LOOK AT THE FACES OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD DIE FOR YOU.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BELIEVE WE CAME HERE OUT OF MALICE?

NO.
NO, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT.
BUT THEN, WHY ARE YOU ALL *HERE?*
WHOSE *BLOOD* IS THIS?
YOU DON'T KNOW?
TRY TO THINK BACK. WHAT IS IT YOU *REMEMBER,* SUPERMAN?
PLEASE, JOHN, CARTER...GIVE THE FLASH AND ME SOME TIME ALONE WITH HIM.
BRAINIAC.
WAS IT BRAINIAC?
NO.

IT WASN'T BRAINIAC.
IT WAS SOMEONE FAR WORSE.
YOU MUST BE KELLY. LOIS'S NEW INTERN.
SO I'LL TRY THIS AGAIN. I'M CLARK KENT. IS MY WIFE IN?
"OOPS," SHE SAID, HER EMBARRASSMENT PALPABLE.
WAIT HERE WHILE I TRACK HER DOWN...
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WOULDN'T STAY BEATEN.
...AND SIMULTANEOUSLY SCORE SOME BREATH MINTS FOR MR. PHILLY-CHEESESTEAK-FOR-LUNCH.
GREAT. THANKS.
A CREATURE LIKE HIM DRINKS REVENGE LIKE MOTHER'S MILK.
NOT BRAINIAC.
OH MY GOD.
DARKSEID.
AND EVEN MORE HORRIFYING...
...HE'D DONE SOMETHING TO LOIS.
TO LOIS.

BOOOM
WHAT ON EARTH?
OH, NO, NO NO, NO...
SEE, THAT'S YOUR WHOLE PROBLEM RIGHT THERE, THINKING ABOUT EARTH.
I MEAN, TALK ABOUT YOUR LOST CAUSES!
YOU LOOK A PERFECT SHOCK, SON.
BETTER SUIT UP!
GODFREY.
TELL ME WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH LOIS LANE.
YOU HAVE THREE SECONDS.
WHOA, WHOA, SAVE IT FOR THE RING, BOY!
YOU THINK WE SENT A BOOM TUBE ALL THE WAY TO EARTH JUST SO YOU COULD PUMMEL POOR, INNOCENT ME?
YOU TELL DARKSEID THAT WHATEVER GAME HE'S GOT IN MIND, I'M NOT PLAYING.
OH, I THINK YOU WILL, SUPERMAN.
ONCE YOU SEE THE SIZE OF THE PURSE.

OOOH, YOUR MUSCLES ARE SO TENSE.
WHAT AM I SAVING? YOU'RE MADE OF STEEL OR SOMETHING, YEAH?
SEE, THE THING IS...IT'S NOT JUST WHAT YOU'VE DONE THAT UPSETS DARKSEID (MAY HE PLEASE NOT BURN ME TO DEATH, OR BOIL MY FLESH).
IT'S WHAT YOU ARE.
DARKSEID (HIS EVERY BELCH IS POETRY, MAN HE NEVER IMPALE ME ON A STICK) IS A FIRM BELIEVER IN THE VIRTUE OF SURVIVAL.
HE BELIEVES, IF YOUR PLANET DIED, IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE THE UNIVERSE'S LOSERS. IF THE UNIVERSE IS A MERITOCRACY, WHY...
HOPE IS A LIE PUNISHABLE BY DEATH
...THEN ALL YOUR LITTLE KRYPTONIAN COUSINS WERE JUST ENTROPY'S PLAYTHINGS.
AND WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU JUMP SHIP?
YOU WIND UP PROTECTING EARTH. ANOTHER DOOMED CRUDHOLE.
THE BOSS JUST DOESN'T GET THAT KIND OF THINKING.
PARDON ME FOR SAYING IT, BUT TO HAVE A HOMELESS LEFTOVER LIKE YOU DEFEATING HIM AND STICKING HIM ON THE SOURCE WALL LIKE AN INSECT SPECIMEN... WELL--
--HE'S PEEVED. YOU CAN'T BLAME HIM.
HE WANTS TO BEAT YOU, AND HE WANTS EVERYONE TO SEE IT. YOU KNOW, AS A MORALE BOOSTER. GO, TEAM.
AND DRESSING IT ALL UP LIKE THE FORMAL COMBAT OF YOUR ADOPTED PLANET?

WELL, THAT WAS MY IDEA!
HELLO, KRYPTONIAN.

I WANT A GOOD, MURDEROUS AND TREACHEROUS FIGHT, WITH AS MANY PUNCTURED ORGANS, SHATTERED BONES AND RIPPED TISSUE AS POSSIBLE.
LET'S GIVE THE AUDIENCE SOMETHING *NET* TO REMEMBER, SHALL WE?
THE ONLY *RULE* IS, ANYONE LEAVING THE RING LOSES.
HUMILIATING YOU *NOW* WILL SAVE ME THE INCONVENIENCE OF YOUR *MARTYRDOM*.
ABOVE ALL, THE EARTH PEOPLE *DESPISE* A *LOSER*.
SOMETHING... NOT RIGHT HERE.
ROUND ONE
WHY THE *SPECTACLE*, DARKSEID?
THIS ISN'T *LIKE* YOU.
MY VICTORY MUST TRANSCEND *LANGUAGE*.
OKAY, JUST A SECOND... *THERE* YOU GO.
AND IF I REFUSE TO FIGHT?
I DON'T FEEL LIKE *MYSELF*, SOMEHOW.
HAVE TO *END* THIS FARCE *QUICKLY*.
RIP HIS KRYPTONIAN *THROAT* OUT, MY LOVE!
THE IMPLANT IN YOUR FEMALE'S BRAIN, THAT I'VE BEEN USING TO CONTROL HER?
IT'S ALSO AN *EXPLOSIVE*. IF YOU FIGHT, THEN I WON'T *DETONATE* IT. BUT IF YOU *REFUSE*...
YOUR CHOICE, SON OF JOR-EL
LOIS!

YOU WIN, DARKSEID.
IN SO MANY WAYS. YES.
IF I MIGHT MAKE A PERSONAL REQUEST--
--IF ANYONE LOSES AN EYE, TRY NOT TO STEP ON IT?
I'M SORT OF A COLLECTOR.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD'VE CHOSEN A GAME YOU KNOW, MONSTER.
WHAM
I BET TEN ON OUR GLORIOUS LEADER!
TWENTY!
I BET MY WHELP ON DARKSEID THE INVINCIBLE!
PERHAPS, BUT I DOUBT YOU'D DO WELL AT PEASANT HUNTING, WEAKLING.
KRAK

IS ANYTHING MORE UNIMAGINABLY DANGEROUS THAN AN INSANE BEING WITH ABSOLUTE POWER?
I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CORPSE, OFF-WORLDER.
IN A WAY, IT'S ALMOST REASSURING THAT THEIR LOGIC IS BEYOND ME.
HRM.
DOES YOUR BODY DECAY, AFTER THE SOLAR RADIATION FADES?
I'D THOUGHT TO MAKE YOU INTO A DOORMAT.
AND OF COURSE...
...THEY HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE TO WHAT I'M ABOUT.
OR PERHAPS I MIGHT STRING YOUR VITALS AROUND MY BED CHAMBER AS ORNAMENTS.
DARKSEID! DARKSEID! DARKSEID!
THE THREATS, THE TORTURE OF HIS OWN PEOPLE, USING LOIS AGAINST ME...IT'S ALL SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME WEAK. MAKE ME DESPAIR.
BAMM
BUT IT ONLY MAKES ME MAD.

ODD.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD FARE BETTER, ALIEN.
HE'S RIGHT.
GETTING WEAKER SOMEHOW.
THE GLOVES.
SOMETHING IN THE...
GODFREY.
YOU PUT... SOMETHING IN THE GAUNTLETS.
WELL, YES. WE'VE HAD AGES TO LOOK FOR BITS OF KRYPTONITE, MY FRIEND.
AND I'M AFRAID THEY WON'T COME OFF. DESAAD DESIGNED THEM AND HE'S FIENDISH CLEVER WITH RESTRAINTS.
NO...
CAN YOU FEEL IT, SUPERMAN?
CAN YOU FEEL YOUR LEGEND DYING?
YOU CHEATED.
YEAH, WELL, TREACHERY IS KINDA MY THING.
I'D TURN AROUND IF I WERE YOU.
THE LOWLIES.

"NNNNNNRGGHH!
THE BARBED WIRE WILL RIP THEM APART!
THE FIGHT DOESN'T END HERE, KRYPTONIAN.
I'LL MAKE YOUR FRIENDS LICK THE DIRT FROM MY BOOTS.
I'LL FEED YOUR FAMILY TO MY DEMON DOGS.
AND YOUR FEMALE WILL BECOME MY LOWEST CASTE CONSORT.
IF I CAN'T END THIS NOW...
...MORE THAN DARKSEID'S BLOOD WILL BE ON MY HANDS.
BURN, MONSTER.
BURN!
SO QUICKLY YOU USE YOUR BEST WEAPON.
I'M UNIMPRESSED
JUST STAND STILL FOR A MOMENT.
JUST WEAKENING THE SURFACE OF THE RING ENOUGH TO DO THIS.
CRUMPH
YOU THINK THIS STOPS ME?
YOU ARE A FOOL.
MAYBE SO, DARKSEID.
BUT YOU...

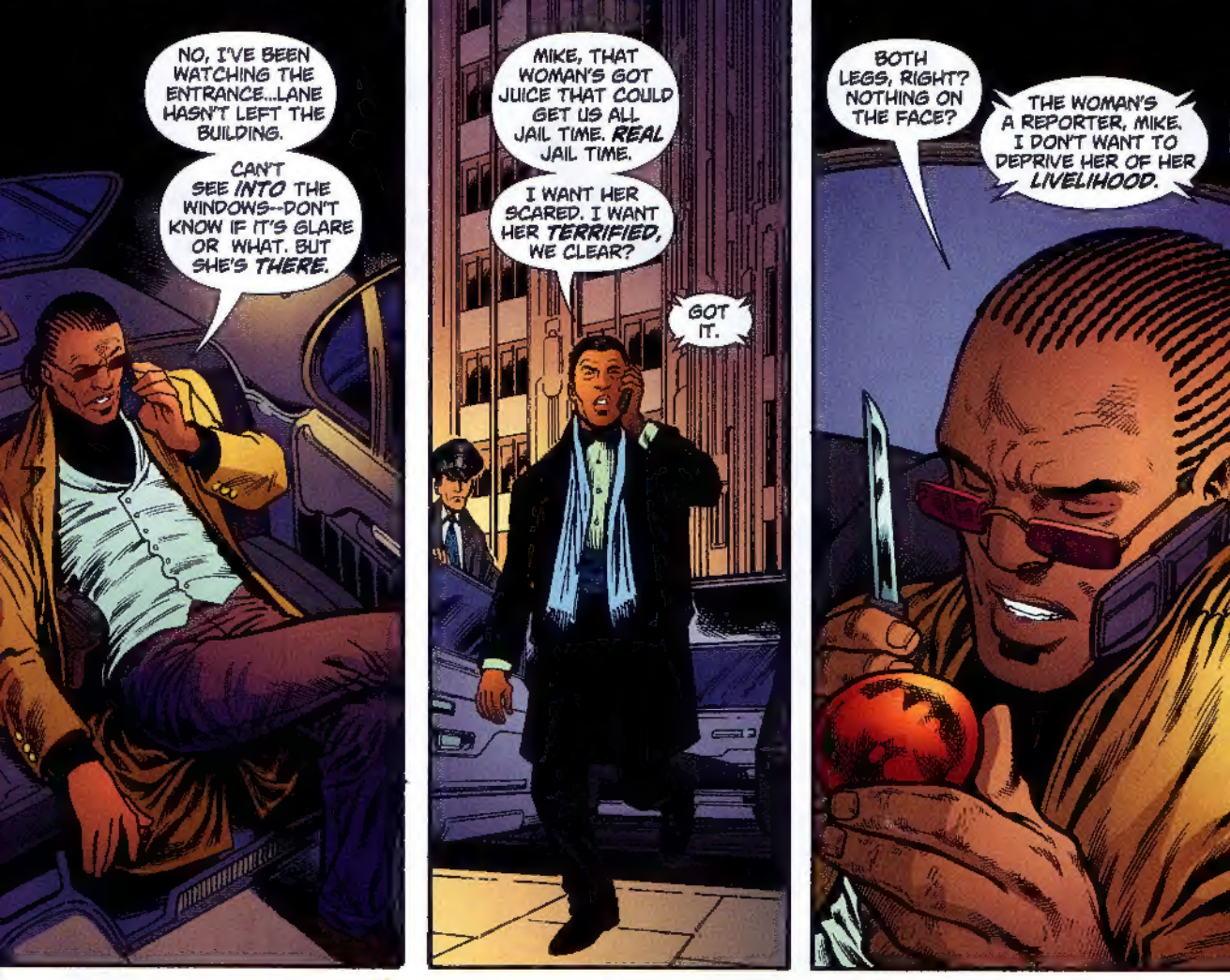
RUN.
RUN!
NNGG!
NO.
...ARE OUT OF THE RING.

AH, UH...
THE OFF-WORLDER WINS?
FAIR IS FAIR, SUPERMAN. YOU MAY HAVE YOUR FEMALE BACK, FREE FROM MY WILL.
TO SHOW YOU WHAT A GOOD SPORTSMAN I AM...
SUPERMAN?
NO! NOO... GLUK
I'LL EVEN PLUCK OUT THE IMPLANT MYSELF.
LOIS!
LOIS.
CONGRATULATIONS, SUPERMAN.
YOU'VE WON.
NEVER AGAIN, MONSTER.
YOU'VE DRAWN YOUR LAST BREATH OF FOUL AIR IN THIS LIFE.
EEEEEEEIAAAGG

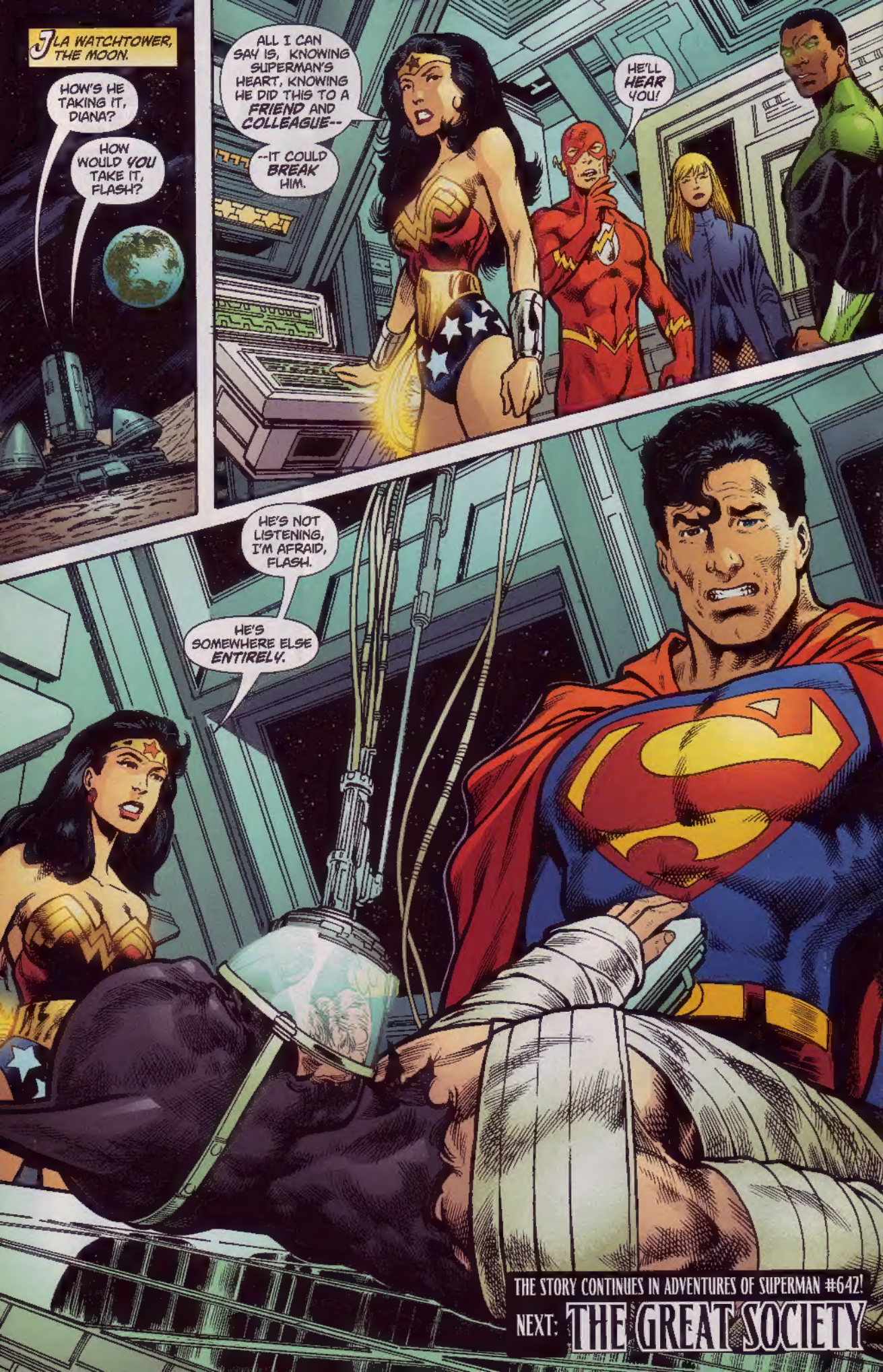
SWAK
DIE.
DIE!
HEAR MY VOICE, DARKSEID.
TODAY, YOU DIE!
CLARK.
STOP.
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
GET AWAY FROM HIM, YOU FILTHY, DIRTY, DELIGHTFUL HUNK OF HORRID BEEFCAKE!
HOW DARE YOU TOUCH DARLING GRANNY'S BELOVED DARKSEID!
STOP! STOP!

AND THEN...
...EVERYTHING WENT WHITE LIKE THE WORLD HAD BEEN SWITCHED OFF.
AND THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER.
SOMEONE'S MANIPULATING YOU, KAL. THAT'S CLEAR.
THE COMMON THEME SEEMS TO BE THE THREAT TO YOUR LOVED ONES.
NO, THE COMMON THREAD IS FAILURE TO PROTECT THEM.
BELIEVE ME, THAT'S THE NIGHTMARE.
BUT, THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHOSE BLOOD THIS IS.
YOU CAN SEE INDIVIDUAL STRANDS OF DNA.
I THINK YOU KNOW.
MY GOD.
SUPERMAN...
...I'M AFRAID IT'S WORSE THAN YOU THINK.
I'M SO SORRY
J'ONN, YOU MONITORING ON THE TELEPATHIC HIGHWAY?
I AM, FLASH.
WE'VE TOLD HIM, BUT IT HASN'T SUNK IN YET.
I THINK WE HAVE TO SHOW HIM.

UNDERSTOOD, FLASH. I'LL MEET YOU ALL AT THE WATCHTOWER.
J'ONN? IS CLARK ALL RIGHT?
IT IS... DIFFICULT TO SAY, LOIS. THE DELUSIONS ARE VIVID, RECENT, AND VIOLENT.
BUT WHILE WE MAY HOPE THAT THE IMMEDIATE DANGER HAS PASSED, I CAN'T YET ALLOW YOU TO COME WITH ME, I'M AFRAID.
J'ONN..
HE AND CLARK ARE SO DIFFERENT. I'VE NEVER REALLY GOTTEN TO KNOW HIM, I DON'T THINK.
BUT IN MY HEART, I KNOW HE'S GOOD. THAT HE'S A GOOD MAN.
LET HIM KNOW, PLEASE. THAT CLARK COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS.
...
I WILL FIND OUT THE TRUTH, LOIS.
I KNOW HE COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS.
NOT CLARK. NEVER CLARK.


NO, I'VE BEEN WATCHING THE ENTRANCE...LANE HASN'T LEFT THE BUILDING.
CAN'T SEE INTO THE WINDOWS--DON'T KNOW IF IT'S GLARE OR WHAT. BUT SHE'S THERE.
MIKE, THAT WOMAN'S GOT JUICE THAT COULD GET US ALL JAIL TIME. REAL JAIL TIME.
I WANT HER SCARED. I WANT HER TERRIFIED, WE CLEAR?
GOT IT.
BOTH LEGS, RIGHT? NOTHING ON THE FACE?
THE WOMAN'S A REPORTER, MIKE. I DON'T WANT TO DEPRIVE HER OF HER LIVELIHOOD.

YOU KNOW WHAT? LET'S NOT BE OVERLY CAUTIOUS HERE.
GO AHEAD AND DO THE FACE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.
CONGRESSMAN SHEPHARD, SO GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT!


JLA WATCHTOWER, THE MOON.
HOW'S HE TAKING IT, DIANA?
HOW WOULD YOU TAKE IT, FLASH?
ALL I CAN SAY IS, KNOWING SUPERMAN'S HEART, KNOWING HE DID THIS TO A FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE--
--IT COULD BREAK HIM.
HE'LL HEAR YOU!
HE'S NOT LISTENING, I'M AFRAID, FLASH.
HE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY.
THE STORY CONTINUES IN ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #642!
NEXT: THE GREAT SOCIETY

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This Month's Cover by...

TONY S. DANIEL AND DEXTER VINES
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TRUE TO THE CORPS

"The Corps is the perfect synthesis of space opera and superheroes."
— co-writer DAVE GIBBONS

GREEN LANTERN CORPS: RECHARGE #1 (September, 2005): At long last, the Green Lantern Corps returns in a five-issue miniseries written by **Dave Gibbons** and **Geoff Johns**! Veteran GLs Guy Gardner, Kilowog, and Kyle Rayner lead a new generation of emerald gladiators, reestablishing the Corps as a symbol of justice throughout the cosmos. White-hot (or is it *green*?) artist **Patrick Gleason** promises the miniseries "will explain things you didn't know you had questions about!"

Next In...

Adventures of Superman #642

"Sacrifice" continues and it's Superman versus the JLA when secrets are revealed and bonds are broken. Can the team stop him from making the mistake of his life?

The Hot List THIS WEEK

ALL STAR BATMAN AND ROBIN, THE BOY WONDER #1
Frank Miller and Jim Lee team up for the first time to bring you Batman and Robin as you've never seen them before in a reinvention of these classic characters!

GREEN ARROW #52
Prelude to the 4-part "Heading into the Light," spinning out of the events of IDENTITY CRISIS! Green Arrow prepares to face off against Doctor Light, who's suddenly become much more deadly.

JLA #116
Part 2 of the 5-part "Crisis of Conscience" finds the Secret Society of Super-Villains back and out for blood. The confrontation rocks the JLA to its very core, turning friends into foes and further splintering the once-great team!

LAW AND DISORDER

WildStorm has lined up some incredible talent for a dark, violent miniseries that truly takes no prisoners — former *Hulk* scribe **Bruce Jones** and artist **Ben Oliver** (THE AUTHORITY: HUMAN ON THE INSIDE) take the law into their own hands this September with VIGILANTE, a six-issue struggle between two men of differing philosophies on finding justice in an unjust world. In this story set in Metropolis, Dr. Justin Powell's theories on handling psychotic criminal behavior are sorely tested when a mysterious figure begins executing society's predators ...but we hear the most disturbing thing in this series may be what the two men have in common!

CROSSING THE LINE

Hey, we all enjoy reading about the psychotic super-villains Batman faces in Gotham City, but *30 Days of Night* horror scribe **Steve Niles** and artist **Scott Hampton** (DARK KNIGHT DYNASTY) have come up with a twisted killer whose irregular criminal patterns have even the Dark Knight stumped! BATMAN: GOTHAM COUNTY LINE is a three-issue Prestige miniseries that places the world's greatest detective on uncomfortable foreign soil — the suburbs — and leaves him with a series of home-invasion murders that only the victims can help him solve! The neighborhood terror unfolds this October!

SOLDIERS GET BOLDER

Ever-eclectic **Grant Morrison** rallies the final three warriors of his SEVEN SOLDIERS this fall with a trio of four-issue miniseries, starting with MISTER MIRACLE in September. Joined by ADAM STRANGE's stellar artist **Pasqual Ferry**, Grant enlists Shilo Norman and his Mother Box, the alien technology that makes him the world's coolest escape artist! But Shilo may not be able to escape his true destiny, one he believes points to an apocalyptic cosmic war being fought through human agents on Earth!

Making her impact felt in November is BULLETEER, in which Grant, penciller **Yanick Paquette**, and inker **Michael Bair** tour the backstreets of the DCU with Allx Irwin, a gorgeous woman who's literally as tough-skinned as they come.

Last but not least, Grant and artist **Doug Mahnke** unleash FRANKENSTEIN! in late November. And from what we've seen of this one, we suggest you forget the classic flat head and bolts look; this is an ultramodern Art Brutal pulp style that gives life to a monster-turned-private investigator of the nightmarish and bizarre! Expect steam-driven guns and giant fists to power a Frankenstein that's fast, wild, and creepy!

– your Mole at 1700

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